

now as in the days of the apostles? (a.) The continuance of these sufferings is conditioned on that of their occasion. If the object for which one is chastened, disciplined, or tested is secured, justice, to say nothing of mercy, demands the removal of the affliction. (b.) Now the elders, being naturally the more experienced in such matters, may help the sick to discover the occasion of his affliction. And if it is found: (1.) That he is guilty of some "besetting sin" or sins; or, (2.) That he is very deficient in the Christian graces, they may lead him to confession, repentance and humiliation. Having done this they should pray for his pardon, and the restoration of his health. (3.) But if it is found that there is no good reason for believing that the occasion of the affliction is in the sick person, they may show him that his affliction is probably neither a chastisement nor a discipline, but a testing of his faith and character. Then they should encourage him to wait in patience, and pray that he may have sustaining grace. But in all these cases they must pray "in the Spirit," saying "Thy will be done." (c.) But the peculiar mention of "sin" in the text, and the stress laid upon confession in connection with prayer, very naturally lead one to think that only afflictions for chastisement and discipline are here meant. Thus the application of this instruction is still more narrowed. (d.) However, allowing the text the widest range of application possible to a Jewish mind, it is clear that there is here no warrant for believing that all kinds of afflictions may be cured by prayer.

To be continued.

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CHURCH POLITY.

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CHAPTER II.

CHURCH MEMBERS.

The apostolic churches were composed of baptized believers. We mean by "baptized" immersed in water, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; and by "believers" those who not only give credence to the truths of Christianity, but who also have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ by a saving faith.

I. The members of apostolic churches were baptized.

It is certain that those gathered into the church at Jerusalem, immediately after the Pentecost, were baptized (Acts 2:41), and though nothing is said of subsequent baptisms in that city, this is sufficient to reveal the law which controlled the church in its reception of members. Nothing would have been required of the first three thousand which was not of those who were afterwards added to them.

Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14-15), and the jailer and his household (verse 33), the first converts and members of the church at Philippi, were also baptized.

We learn from Acts 18:8, that when Paul gathered a church at Corinth he baptized those received into it. That all its members were baptized is put beyond question by his first Epistle to this church, which he addressed as baptized (1:13; 12:13).

When Paul entered Ephesus for the purpose of preaching the gospel, he found a company of disciples who had received John's baptism, but on account of their imperfect knowledge at the time of their baptism, he re-baptized them (Acts 19:2-5). If he re-baptized these, he certainly required baptism of those subsequently received into the same church. In his Epistle to the Ephesians, he speaks as though their baptism was as well known as their Lord and their faith (Eph. 4:5).

Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12, unquestionably establish the fact that the members of the church at Rome, of the churches of Galatia, and of the church at Colosse, were all baptized.

II. The members of apostolic churches were believers.

1. None except believers were baptized. This is implied, if not taught, in the great Commission (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16). Apostolic teaching or example alone could justify an inversion of the order here presented of belief and baptism; but the Apostles, in both their utterances and practices, strictly followed it. Those that "received the word" at Jerusalem were baptized (Acts 2:41, 44). The believers in Samaria received baptism (8:12), and only on the condition of belief would Philip baptize the eunuch (8:37). After the scales fell from Saul's eyes, he was baptized (9:18). Peter could not forbid baptism to those at Caesarea who spoke with tongues (10:46), and had received the Holy Spirit (verse 47). After Lydia's heart was opened (16:15), and the jailer and his household believed, they were baptized (verses 33, 34).

2. But we have, if possible, still more direct and conclusive evidence that the churches of the New Testament were made up of believers. The church at Jerusalem is spoken of as a body of saints (Acts 9:13; Rom. 15:25, 26; 11 Cor. 8:4). The church at Lydda (Acts 9:32), Rome (Rom. 1:7), Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1, 2), Ephesus (Eph. 1:1), Philippi (Phil. 1:1) and Colosse (Col. 1:2) are all spoken of or addressed as saints. The word translated saint is cognate with *hagiozo*, which is used to denote cleansing by sacrificial blood (Heb. 10:10, 14), purification by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:16), and setting apart for a sacred purpose (Jno. 10:36; 17:17). The primary meaning of saint is pure, clean. Paul, then, means by saints those who have been cleansed by the blood of Christ, purified by the Spirit, and set apart to the service of God.

Paul also addresses the churches in Rome, Thessalonica and Galatia as brethren (Rom. 12:1; 1 Thess. 1:4; 5:1, 4, 12; Gal. 1:11; 3:15). Being brethren of the Apostle, like him they were renewed men. Again, he calls the Thessalonians "holy" (1 Thess. 5:27). The Hebrews are also styled "holy brethren" (Heb. 3:1). Those to whom this epithet was applied must have been made holy through faith in Christ.

There are also in the epistles expressions, too numerous to mention, which describe the members of the churches addressed as regenerate and believers. Paul speaks of the faith of the church at Rome (Rom. 1:8; 6:17); he calls the Corinthians the temple of God which is holy (1 Cor. 3:17); he exhorts them to be separate from unbelievers (II Cor. 6:14-16). He reminds the Galatians that they had received the Spirit (Gal. 3:2), and exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty conferred by Christ (verse 1). He assures the Ephesians that they are fellow-citizens with the saints (Eph. 2:19), and an "habitation of God the Spirit" (verse 22). He also tells the Colossians that though they were dead in trespasses, Christ had imparted to them spiritual life and granted them forgiveness (Col. 2:13). This conclusive testimony may be developed to almost any extent. The conclusion, therefore, is irrefragable, that the apostolic churches were made up of baptized believers.

There is, then, according to the teachings of the New Testament, no church for unbelievers. The churches do not, as Rome teaches, save men by receiving them into their communion. Nor is there any place in them for baptized infants. A church is simply a body of baptized believers, united by a common faith, whose divine commission is to preach the gospel, which they have themselves experienced, to every creature.

1 Not in the best MSS.

Essays.

THE PENITENT THIEF.

A discourse by P. J. Brown, called out by the remarks on the above subject by J. B. Lair in No. 4 of the BRETHREN EVANGELIST.

IN discoursing on the subject of the penitent thief, the first thing to consider is what some think is an apparent contradiction between the several evangelists. According to Matthew and Mark, it would seem that both malefactors railed on Jesus, while according to Luke, only one of them did so, and the other confessed Christ as having done nothing amiss. That they were jointly known as malefactors must be apparent to all, and the action of one was accepted as the action of both. When Matthew and Mark say, "And they that were crucified with him reviled him," we are not to understand that both simultaneously uttered the words of reproach. Such interpretation of Scripture would land us in many a wild inextricable maze. When American history tells us that in 1861, "The South rebelled," we must not forget that there was a noble Elder John Kline living in the South, whose blood was shed because he loved the old Union and hated rebellion. Again, when it is written that in 1892, the American people elected Grover Cleveland, I want it distinctly understood that there was to my personal knowledge, at least one American who did not vote for him. In like manner, it is written that they reviled him, it is equally clear that one of them did not do so, but confessed him as Lord. Being jointly held as criminals, one, the worst, united his voice with the howling mob that was thirsting for Christ's blood, and no doubt did it in a boisterous manner, naturally attracting the attention of Matthew and Mark, who were eye witnesses, they not knowing that a feeling of conviction and penitence had rolled across the breast of the other malefactor, for it is not likely that his words were heard above the din and clamor of the ungodly crowd. But they were heard by Him to whom they were addressed, for no thunder seals his ear against the voice of penitence, and his words, with

the answer to them, were made known to St. Luke, who has recorded the same as a part of the Testament of Jesus Christ. He did not write this history from any private knowledge as an eye-witness, but from a knowledge that is far better; by inspiration of God as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Hence we can not accept the declaration that there is any "interpolation" within a thousand miles of Luke 23:43. The next question we shall consider is, what was the promise that Christ made to this poor penitent? By referring to the history as given in the 23rd chapter of Luke we learn that the promise, whatever it was, was given as the answer to a certain request, and the only way to get an intelligent understanding of the answer, is to arrive at a clear knowledge of the nature and design of the request. What then was the request? Was it that Jesus should take him along to heaven, as is generally and very erroneously believed? We answer no. Was it that Christ should that day prepare a place for him in heaven and send a convoy of angels to bring him from a felon's grave to a seat in glory? Nothing of this sort entered his mind. Please read it again and mind this time that the thief does not say, Lord remember me when thou *goest*, (or *gettest*) into thy kingdom. No, there was just the difference from this, that there is in going to heaven and coming from heaven, and that is a very essential difference. "The Son of man came down from heaven, John 3:13, and He went up into heaven, Luke 24:51." But to neither of these events did the thief refer, for the reason that the request reads "Lord remember me when thou *comest* in thy kingdom." Here the common version very erroneously renders it "into" instead of *in*. See Revised Version, and Emphatic Diaglott. Evidently this thief was not an entire stranger to Jesus and his teaching, which is clear from the knowledge he evinces of Christ in declaring to his fellow-malefactor, "This man has done nothing amiss." And we have much reason to believe that he had heard a large part of Christ's teaching, that he heard him when he said, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory." Matt. 25:31. Then is when the poor fellow wanted to be remembered. And again, "Verily I say unto you, that he shall be with me in Paradise." Matt. 16:28. And in view of this, the poor penitent says to Jesus, Lord remember me when thou *comest* in thy kingdom." Now I think we have a rational understanding of the nature and meaning of his request, and it is in order to examine the answer that Jesus gave him. It is this: "Jesus said unto him, 'Verily I say unto thee, today (not at my second coming) but, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise. I think the fact is clear to all that Christ went somewhere that day, and wherever he went the poor penitent had the promise of being with him. A soul-cheering and far-reaching promise. He had the honor of dying with Jesus, and he now had the assurance that he should be with him in the next act of the great drama of human redemption.

We will next try to find where Jesus went that day, for when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, spirit, or life that ghost, spirit or life went somewhere when it left the body.

The prevailing belief and teaching, that Christ took the penitent thief to heaven with himself on the day of his crucifixion, and that it sets a precedent, guaranteeing salvation to all who endeavor to repent in their dying hour, and that without baptism or the observance of any of the ordinances of the gospel, is so utterly groundless, that in its examination in the blaze of gospel light it will be swept away, and like the "baseless fabric of a vision, leave not a wreck behind." Did Christ take the penitent thief to heaven that day? We answer emphatically no, for the very good reason that Christ did not himself go to heaven on that day; three days after this occurrence Mary meets him in the garden and he declares to her that he had not yet ascended to his Father; and Paul in Eph. 4:9 declares that he first descended into the lower parts of the earth before he ascended. Here are two infallible witnesses testifying conclusively that Christ did not go to heaven on the day of his crucifixion, and we must look to some other locality to find him after he left the body.

We turn to 1 Peter 3:18, and find the following declaration: "For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which he also went and preached to the spirits in prison." There is not a more clear, frank and unmistakable statement in the Bible than this, that Christ at the time or immediately after his death in the body, in his spirit, went and preached to the spirits in prison, naming as some of his auditors those who were disobedient in the days of Noah, and yet, strange to say,

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